

# THE PILLAR of LIGHT

By Louis Tracy,  
Author of  
"The Wings of the Morning"  
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Edward J. Clode

## CHAPTER IX.

"You surprise me," broke in Brand. "You speak as if the Chickadee were nearly as old as this lighthouse, yet I have never even heard her name before."

"You know her well enough all the same," said the other ruefully. "This is her maiden voyage since she was altered, and they rechristened her, too—always an unlucky thing to do, I say. Bless your heart, man, she is the old Princess Royal. Eh? What's that?"

He guffawed merrily at Brand's involuntary exclamation. "Certain! Well, surely I ought to know. I have passed most of my service with the company in her, and when I took a crew to Campion to navigate her to New York after she was smartened up a little I imagined I would see her laid by forever the next time we saw the lights of old England. My goodness, even what was left of the old girl ought to know her way better than that."

"But what did really happen?" "Driving her, I tell you, driven her full port to land the mails at South-Campton twelve hours ahead of schedule. With that awful sea lifting her and a shaft twenty feet longer, what could you expect? Poor Perkins! A rare hard worker too. Now he's gone down with his ship on over 200 passengers' crew."

"Fading by the number saved I feared that more were lost." "It's the old season, you know. The passenger list was light. For the Lord's sake, think of what it might have been in May or June!"

"It is bad enough as it is. All has not ended with the disappearance of the vessel." "A sailor shot a sharp glance at Brand.

"You can't be thinking any one was to blame"—he commenced. But Brand waved aside the fancied imputation. "Blame!" he said. "With a broken shaft! In that whirlwind! No, no, I went for you to talk over the new difficulty which has to be faced. There are food, water and fuel here for three men for two months. If you do a little more you will find that the available stores on the basis of full rations will maintain eighty-one people for two days and a quarter."

"But we're only six miles from the mainland." Mr. Emmett had not yet grasped the true meaning of the figures. "I have been here more than once for six weeks at a stretch, when, for all the assistance that could be received, might as well have been within the Arctic circle."

Again the sailor jerked his thumb toward the reef. "Is it as bad as all that?" he queried anxiously. "Yes."

"But six weeks! Good Lord!" Mr. Emmett had done the little sum. "That is exceptional. A week is the average, unless the unexpected happens, after a gale like this. And a week will test our endurance to the limit."

Mr. Emmett whistled softly. A grisly phantom was creeping at him. He shivered, and not from cold. "By Jove!" he said. "What's to be done?"

"In the first place you must help me to maintain discipline. To leave the rock today or tomorrow will be an absolute impossibility. On the next day, with luck and a steady moderation of the weather, we may devise some desperate means of landing all the active men or getting fresh supplies. That is in the hands of Providence. I want you to warn your officers and others whom you can trust, either sailors or civilians. Better arrange three watches. My daughters will have charge of the stores. By going through the lists in the storehouse I can portion out the rations for six days. I think we had better fix on that minimum."

"Of course I will back you up in every way," said Mr. Emmett, who felt chivalrous at this moment. "I know you are acting wisely, but I admit I am scared at the thought of what may happen if those days pass and no help is available."

Brand knew what would happen and it was hard to look the secret in his heart. He alone must live. That was essential, the one thing carved in stone upon the tablet of his brain, a thing to be fought out behind barred door, revolver in hand.

Whatever else took place, if men and women, perhaps his own sweet girls, were dying of thirst and starvation, the light must shine at night over its allotted span of the slumbering sea. There on the little table beside him lay the volume of rules and regulations. What did it say?

"The keepers, both principal and assistant, are enjoined never to allow any interests, whether private or otherwise, to interfere with the discharge of their public duties, the importance of which to the safety of navigation cannot be overrated."

There was no ambiguity in the words, no halting sentence which opened a way for a man to plead, "I thought it best." Those who framed the rule meant what they said. No man could bend the steel of their intent.

To end the intolerable strain of his thoughts Stephen Brand forced his lips to a thin smile and his voice to say harshly:

"If the worst comes to the worst, there are more than 3,000 gallons of kerosene in store. That should maintain life. It is a vegetable oil."

"Then Constance thrust her glowing face into the lighted area."

"Dad," she cried cheerfully, "the men wish to know if they may smoke. Poor fellows! They are so miserable, so cold and damp and dreary down there. Please say 'Yes.'"

"Miss Brand, give me one moment."

Thanksgiving, the offering of those who had been snatched from death and from mortal fear more painful than

death.

The singing ceased as suddenly as it began. Mr. Emmett and the pursuer were waiting for the first watch.

The interruption did not seem to help Mrs. Vansittart. She spoke awkwardly, checking her thoughts as though fearful she might be misunderstood or say too much.

"I am better," she explained; "quite recovered. I gave up my bunk to one who needed it."

"I am sure we are all doing our best to help one another," volunteered Brand. "But I am restless. The sight of your sister—aroused vague memories. Do you mind—I find it hard to explain—your name is familiar. I knew some people—called Brand—a Mr. Stephen Brand—and his wife."

She halted, seemingly at a loss. Endeavoring helplessly to solve the reason for this unexpected coincidence, but quite unable to make the explanation easier, found herself interrupted.

"Yes," she said. "That is quite possible, of course, though you must have been quite a girl. Mrs. Brand died many years ago."

Mrs. Vansittart flinched from the feeble rays of the lantern.

"That is so—I think I heard of Mrs. Brand's death—in London, I fancy, but they had only one child."

End laughed.

"I am a mere nobody," she said. "I had adopted me. I came here one day in June, nineteen years ago, and I must have looked so forlorn that they took me to their hearts, thank God!"

Another solemn chord of the hymn floated up to them.

"Let all thy converse be sincere, Thy conscience as the bonny clear."

The rest of the verse evaded them. Probably a door was closed.

Mrs. Vansittart seemed to be greatly perturbed. End, intent on the occupation of the moment, believed these little chat was ended. To round it off, so to speak, she went on quickly:

"I imagine I am the most mysterious person living—in my early history, I mean. Mrs. Brand saw me floating toward this lighthouse in a deserted boat. I was nearly dead. The people who had been with me were gone—either starved and thrown into the sea or knocked overboard during a collision, as the boat was badly damaged. My linen was marked 'E. T.' That is the only definite clue I can tell you. All the rest is guesswork. Evidently anybody cared to claim me, and here I am."

Mrs. Vansittart was leaning back in the deep gloom, supporting herself against the door of the bedroom.

"What a romance!" she said faintly. "A vague one, and this is no time to gossip about it. Can I get you anything?"

End felt that she really must not prolong their conversation, and the other woman's exclamation. "A threatened further talk."

"No, thank you. You'll excuse me, I know. My natural interest!"

But End, with a parting smile, was halfway toward the next landing, and Mrs. Vansittart was free to re-enter the crowded apartment where her fellow sufferers were wondering when they would see daylight again. She did not stir. The darkness was intense, the narrow passage drafty, and the column thrilled and quivered in an unceasing manner. She heard the clanging of a door above and knew that End had gone into the second apartment given over to the women. Somewhere higher up was the glaring light of which she had a faint recollection, though she was almost unconscious

when unbound from the rope and carried into the next room.

And at that moment, not knowing it, she had been near to Stephen Brand, might have spoken to him, looked into his face. What was he like? She wondered. Had he aged greatly with the years? A lighthouse keeper! Of all professions in this wide world how came he to adopt that? And what ugly trick was fate about to play her that she should be cast ashore on the desolate rock where the woman who "died many years ago," when she, Mrs. Vansittart, was "quite a girl"—the girl featured the clear profile, the wealth of dark brown hair and a grace of movement not often seen in English women.

Though her teeth chattered with the cold, Mrs. Vansittart could not bring herself to leave the vaultlike stairway. She knew more the lyrics, she sang; her heart was with words of praise. Evidently there was one among them who not only knew the words, but could lead them mightily in the times of many old favorites.

The opening of a door—caused by the passing to and fro of some of the ship's officers—brought to her distracted ears the concluding bars of a verse. When the voices swelled forth again she caught the full refrain:

"Raise thine eyes to heaven When thy spirit quails, When by tempests driven, Heart and courage fail."

Such a message might well carry good cheer to all who heard, yet Mrs. Vansittart listened as one in a trance to whom the divinest promise was a thing unasked for and unrecognized. After passing through the greater peril of the reef in a state of supreme consciousness, she was now moved to extreme activity by a more personal and selfish danger. There was she, a human atom, to be destroyed or saved at the little whim of circumstance; here, with life and many things worth living for restored to her safe keeping, she saw imminent risk of a collapse with which the nebulous dangers of the wreck were in no way comparable. It would have been well for her could she only realize the promise of the hymn.

"Our little affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory."

Not so ran Mrs. Vansittart's jungle of thoughts. The plans, the schemes, the builded edifice of many years, threatened to fall in ruin about her. In such bitter mood there was no consolation. She sought not to find spiritual succor, but bewailed the catastrophe which had befallen her.

It assuredly contributed to that affliction which is but for a moment—that Constance should happen just

then to run up the stairs toward the hospital. Each flight was so contrived that it curved across two-thirds of the superlunary area allotted to the stairway. Any one ascending made a complete turn of the right about to reach the door of the room on any given landing and the foot of the ladder to the next.

Hence the girl came unexpectedly face to face with Mrs. Vansittart. The meeting startled her. This pale woman, so thinly clad in the demitisse of evening wear on shipboard, should not be standing there.

"Is anything wrong?" she cried, raising her lantern just as End did when she encountered the sailors.

"No, no," said the other, passing a nervous hand over her face. Constance, with alert intelligence, fancied she detected recognition.

"Why are you standing here? It is so cold. You will surely make yourself ill."

"I was wondering if I might see Mr. Brand," came the desperate answer, the words bubbling forth with unrestrained vehemence.

"See my father?" repeated the girl. She took thought for an instant. The lighthouse keeper would not be able to leave the lamp for nearly three hours. When dawn came she knew he would have many things to attend to—signals to the Land's End, the arrangement of supplies, which he had already mentioned to her, and a host of other matters. Four o'clock in the morning was an unconventional hour for an interview, but time itself was moving fast under the conditions prevalent on the Gulf Coast.

"I will ask him," she went on hurriedly, with an uncomfortable feeling that Mrs. Vansittart resented her judicial pause.

"Thank you."

To the girl's ears the courteous acknowledgment conveyed an odd note of menace. If the eyes are the windows of the soul, surely the voice is its subtle gauge. The more transparently simple, clean minded the hearer, the more accurate is the resonant impression. Constance found herself vaguely perplexed by two jostling abstractions. If they took shape it was in mute questioning. Why was Mrs. Vansittart so ready to reply? It might be, perhaps, that she was weary, and why did her mobile smile seem to veil a hostile intent?

But the fresh, gracious smile faded in her cast aside these unwelcome studies in mind reading.

"He has so much to do," she explained. "Although there are many of us on the rock, I think he has never been so utterly alone. Won't you wait inside until I return?"

"Not unless I am in the way," pleaded the other. "I am choking in there. The air here, the space, are so grateful."

So Constance passed her. Mrs. Vansittart noted the dainty manner in which she picked up her skirts to mount the stairs. She caught a glimpse of the tailor-made gown, striped silk undershirt, well fitting, low heeled, wide welted expensive boots. Trust a woman to see all those things at a glance, with even the shifting glimmer of a storm proof lantern to aid the quick perception.

As the girl went out of her sight a reminiscence came to her.

"No wonder I was startled," she murmured. "That sailor's coat she wears helps the resemblance. Probably it is her father's."

Then the loud silence of the lighthouse appalled her. The slugging had ceased or was shut off by a closed door. One might as well be in a tomb as surrounded by this tangible darkness. The tremulous granite, so cold and hard, yet alive in its own grim strength, the murmuring commotion of wind and waves swelling and dying in ghostlike echoes, suggested a grave, a vault close sealed from the outer world, though pulsating with the far-away existence of homeless multitudes.

Brooding in this gloom, a tortured soul without form and void, she awaited the return of her messenger.

Constance, after looking in at the hospital, went on to the service room. Her father was not there. She glanced up to the trimming stage, expecting to see him attending to the lamp. No. He had gone. Somewhat bewildered, for she was almost certain he was not in any of the lower apartments, she climbed up to the little door in the glass frame.

At last there he was on the landward side of the gallery. What was the matter now? Surely there was not another vessel in distress. However, being relieved from any duty as to his whereabouts, she went back to the service room and gave herself the luxury of a moment's rest. Oh, how tired she was! Not until she sat down did she realize what it meant to live a tortured soul without form and void, she awaited the return of her messenger.

Her respite was of short duration. Brand, his oilskins gleaming with wet, came in.

"Hello, sweetheart! What's up now?" he cried in such cheerful voice that she knew all was well.

"That was exactly what I was going to ask you," she said.

"I believe I was not there," he replied, with a side nod toward Mount's Bay.

Constance knew that the Falcon was a sturdy steam trawler, a bulldog little ship, built to face anything in the shape of gales.

"They can do nothing, of course," she commented.

"No. I stood between them and the light for a second, and they evidently understood that I was on the lookout as a lantern dipped several times, which I interpreted as meaning that they will return at daybreak. Now they are off to Penzance again."

"They turned safely then?"

"Shipped a sea or two, no doubt. The wind is dropping, but the sea is running mountains high."

He had caught off his oilskins. Constance suddenly felt a strong disinclination to rise. Being a strong-willed young person, she sprang up instantly.

"I came to ask you if you can see Mrs. Vansittart," she said.

"Mrs. Vansittart?" he cried, with a genuine surprise that thrilled her with a pleasure she assuredly could not account for.

"Yes. She asked if she might have a word with you."

He threw his hands up in comic despair.

"Tell the good lady I am up to my eyes in work. The oil is running low. I must be to the pump at once. I have my journal to fill. If there is no sun I cannot heliograph, and I have a

last of signals to look up and not ready. And it's word in your ear, Constance. We will be at home on the rock for the next forty-eight hours. Give the lady my very deep regrets and ask her to allow me to send for her when I have a minute to spare some hours hence."

She bowed him.

"You don't old thing," she cried. "You will tell yourself to death, I am sure."

"I might as well be the devil," he laughed. "You will feel this night in your bones, I guarantee. By the way, no matter who goes hungry, don't prepare any breakfast until I come to you. I suppose the kitchen is your headquarters?"

"Yes, though End has had far more of Mr. Pyne's company. She is cook, you know."

"I'll give three to you."

"He is a lumpy maid, drying clothes."

"I think I shall like him," quipped Brand. "It seems to be a helpful sort of youngster. That reminds me. Tell him to report himself to Mr. Emmett as my assistant. If he cares for the post that's his."

He did not see the ready spirit of mischief that danced in her eyes. She returned Mr. Pyne's "giving things" with Mr. Emmett's "giving things."

When she reached the first bedroom floor Mrs. Vansittart had gone.

"I thought it would be strange if she stood long in this draft," mused Constance. She opened the door. The lady she sought was leaning disconsolately against a wall.

"Is father?" she asked.

"I fear I was thoughtless," interrupted Mrs. Vansittart, "I must be greatly obliged to you if you can see him in the morning. If he is the vessel comes. They will send a ship when to take me off."

"At the earliest possible moment," was the final answer. "Indeed, and I have been so long in the morning, I will return at daybreak."

There was a forlorn chorus from the other inmates. Constance had not the requisite hardihood to tell them how they misinterpreted her words.

As she quitted them she admitted to herself that Mrs. Vansittart, though really very charming, it never occurred to her that her new acquaintance might have made the discovery of the existence of a lady in the lighthouse.

Included Mrs. Vansittart now bitterly regretted the impulse which led her to betray any knowledge of Stephen Brand or his daughter. Of all the follies of a wayward life, that was immeasurably the greatest in Mrs. Vansittart's critical scale.

But what would you? It is not often given to a woman of nerves, a woman of volatile nature, a shallow woman, yet versed in the deepest wiles of intrigue, to be shipwrecked, to be plucked from a living lock, to be swung through a hurricane to the secure insecurity of a dark and hollow pillar standing on a Calvary of storm tossed waves, and then, while her senses swim in utmost bewilderment, to be confronted with a living ghost.

Yet that was precisely what had happened to her.

Fate is gracious at times. This last of refuge was a place of torture. Mrs. Vansittart broke down and wept in her distress.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Weather Forecast.

No change.

—London Scrap.

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## RAILROAD TIME TABLES. L. & E. RAILWAY SOUTHERN RY.

SUMMER TIME TABLE. EFFECTIVE MAY 20, 1906.

WEST BOUND.		No. 1	No. 3
		Daily	Daily
		Ex. Sun.	Ex. Sun.
Lv. Jackson	6 25	2 25	
O. & K. Junction	6 29	2 30	
Elkdale	6 33	2 34	
Oakdale	6 40	2 41	
Athol	6 56	2 57	
Tallega	7 04	3 05	
St. Helens	7 16	3 17	
Beattyville Junct	7 26	3 27	
Torrent	7 47	3 48	
Natural Bridge	8 01	3 55	
Campton Junct	8 03	3 57	
Stanton	8 28	4 22	
Clay City	8 37	4 31	
Indian Fields	8 54	4 48	
L. & E. Junct	9 10	5 03	
Winchester	9 23	5 20	
Ar. Lexington	10 10	6 05	

LAST BOUND.		No. 2	No. 4
		Daily	Daily
		Ex. Sun.	Ex. Sun.
Lv. Lexington	2 25	7 45	
Winchester	3 10	8 25	
L. & E. Junct	3 25	8 37	
Indian Fields	3 40	8 54	
Clay City	4 00	9 13	
Stanton	4 10	9 23	
Campton Junct	4 40	9 50	
Natural Bridge	4 45	9 54	
Torrent	4 57	10 06	
Beattyville Junct	5 18	10 29	
St. Helens	5 27	10 39	
Tallega	5 37	10 49	
Athol	5 45	10 59	
Oakdale	5 50	11 06	
Elkdale	6 02	11 22	
O. & K. Junct	6 05	11 26	
Ar. Jackson	6 10	11 30	

Trains Nos. 3 and 4 daily; other trains daily except Sunday.

The following connections are made daily except Sunday:

O. & K. JUNCTION—Trains No. 3 and 4 with the Ohio & Kentucky for local stations on O. & K. Ry.

CAMPION JUNCTION—All trains connect with Mountain Central Railway for Pine Ridge and Campion.

J. R. BARR, Gen'l Mgr.  
CHAS. SCOTT, G. P. A.

## Mountain Central.

Depart	Arrive
6 30 a.m. Pine Ridge	11 05 a.m.
2 30 p.m. Pine Ridge	6 00 p.m.
8 00 a.m. Campion Jun	10 05 a.m.
4 00 p.m. Campion Jun	4 10 p.m.

Make connection with L. & E. passenger trains.

## O. & K. Railway.

Effective May 21st, 1905

Lv Leadville Junction	12 55	4
Ar Beattyville	5 15	
	P. M.	A.
Lv Beattyville	1 10	6
		A.
Lv Irvine	2 40	7
Lv Richmond	3 45	8
Ar Valley View	4 12	9
" Nicholasville	4 35	9
" Versailles	5 20	10

Nos. 1 and 2 will make close connection at O. & K. Junction with Nos. 3 and 4 for points on the Lexington & Eastern Railway.

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